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# Hanoi view: Kissinger flurry

Vietnam peace rumors sprout once again as Henry Kissinger darts back and forth to Paris, as his deputy, General Haig, returns from talks with President Thieu, and as candidates Nixon and Agnew drop hints along the campaign trail. Is agreement really in the offing? 'No,' in essence, is the answer of the Communist delegates to the Paris peace talks: Louis Winitzer, just back from extensive interviews with them in Paris, explains their point of view. (Mr. Winitzer, U.S. correspondent for Montreal's French-language daily La Presse, has had numerous previous discussions with North Vietnamese officials in recent years, and has visited North and South Vietnam.) Meanwhile, Takashi Oka reports from Paris (Page 2) that the peace talks indeed appear stalled.

By Louis Winitzer

Special to The Christian Science Monitor

Paris

• No settlement of the Vietnam war is likely before the American presidential election on Nov. 7, or indeed at any time in the near future.

• The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong see presidential adviser Henry Kissinger's secret talks with North Vietnamese Politburo member Le Duc Tho as more a part of the American election campaign than of American willingness to reach a compromise acceptable to their side.

• The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong go along with the Kissinger-Le Duc Tho talks to prove to Peking and Moscow North Vietnamese and Viet Cong willingness to be flexible — which is what the Chinese and the Russians have urged them to be.

• The need to prove this flexibility now may be all the greater because the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong are probably planning a new offensive.

• The sticking point in the Kissinger-Le Duc Tho talks is not so much the person of South Vietnamese President Thieu as the conflict between the two sides over long-term political control of South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong want to irrevocably bolt the door against an American return to Vietnam (after American withdrawal) if the Americans subsequently see things going politically the wrong way for them in South Vietnam.

• The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong believe that they can achieve their

ends by playing "the democratic game," that is by insisting on their formula for a tripartite government in Saigon and on having elections held at a near date in South Vietnam under independent auspices — but continuing to fight until they get this. They believe, further, they can continue to hold out against bombing and blockade until they do get what they want.

Private talks with the principal North Vietnamese and Viet Cong representatives here, Xuan Thuy and Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, have led this writer to the above conclusions — some of them admittedly by inference.

Against this background, continued deadlock at the latest round of weekly Vietnam peace talks here Thursday should be no surprise.

Discussing Dr. Kissinger's earlier secret talks here with Le Duc Tho, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong representatives say privately Mr. Kissinger's visits to Paris are a "propaganda ploy."

Lyndon Johnson, they say, used crude methods to convey the impression that he was searching for a diplomatic solution. He used to state the number of miles that he or Dean Rusk had journeyed "in search of peace."

Mr. Nixon, they say, resorts to more sophisticated techniques: hints, understatements, and even secrecy are used to give people the impression that "something is going on in Paris."

## Main issues skirted?

Most of the time, they say, Mr. Kissinger avoids discussing the main problems and tries to find areas of agreement on matters of lesser importance — in the

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hope that he may then announce, directly or by ways of leaks, that an area of agreement had been reached." But in fact, they say, nothing has been settled at all.

Why then do the Communists go along with this ploy and agree to be a party to purportedly sterile discussions?

Although they will not say this and although they absolutely refuse to speculate on their military operations, the most informed guess is that they are about to launch a new military offensive in the South. Because of this they apparently are anxious to show their reluctant Soviet and Chinese suppliers that they are not intransigent, that they remain willing to talk while shooting, that they are flexible and realistic and therefore not unworthy of their allies' assistance.

The nub of the matter, as far as negotiations are concerned, remains what it has always been: (1) Who will rule South Vietnam in the near future? And (2) Who will run it in the distant future?

Although Xuan Thuy and Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh do not say as much, it is this reporter's impression that South Vietnamese President Thieu is not really the main issue. Rather, his political future is a smokescreen behind which both sides are fencing over a bigger issue.

The Sept. 11 statement from the Viet Cong refers to President Thieu's departure less specifically than in the past, even though the Viet Cong still insists privately that he must go. But the Viet Cong has always stated that policies counted, not personalities.

Thus it is conceivable that if what they call Saigon's "repressive apparatus" (concentration camps, police, censorship) were dismantled, they might not object to a Saigon administration within which General Thieu was a member of a tripartite government. And, just as the Viet Cong may not be really after General Thieu's head, so President Nixon might not be irrevocably opposed to dumping him. What the U.S. Government has opposed so far is a tripartite government which it sees as a device for a Communist take-over.

The Viet Cong are confident that time is on their side and that they can afford to play "the democratic game." The chips, they feel, will fall their way, in several years.

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